TRENDS

UPCOMING TECHNOLOGIES AND PRODUCTS

24 The Mickey Mouse PC Club
24 Sony's New TV Tech
24 Public Supports E-Voting
26 Sharp Adds 3D to New LCD
26 Put Your Own Picture on a Stamp
26 Unpatched PCs Get Infected Quicker
28 Gear: New Products

Refilling Stations for Your Printer Are Coming to a Mall Near You

ON YOUR NEXT shopping trip to the mall, you might be able to pick up a refill for your inkjet-printer cartridge. Franchise-based inkjet (and laser-toner) filling stations are appearing in storefronts and mall kiosks around the country, where consumers can have empty ink cartridges refilled for about half the price of a new one.

Refill shops target value-minded customers who don't want to pay $30 or more for a new inkjet cartridge, but they may have an uphill battle against consumers who have tried mediocre home refill kits. "Third-party providers are battling against old perceptions of low-quality refills," says Jana Munford, director of research for printing supplies at research firm Current Analysis.

"The problem with refill cartridges is not really the ink quality, but sloppy refilling and bad procedures," says Daniel Wencel, president of Caboodle Cartridge, a California chain that plans to have 60 stores nationwide by the end of the year. Caboodle uses ultrasound to clean cartridges and vacuum chambers to refill them, charging 55 to 70 percent of the price of a new one.

For printer manufacturers, which make big profits selling cartridges, refills are bad news. Epson, Hewlett-Packard, and Lexmark include chips in their cartridges that stop printing after a certain number of pages have been printed. The companies say the chips maintain print quality and improve customer support, while refill advocates maintain that the chips' true purpose is to make refilling more difficult and prevent use of third-party cartridges.

"We don't recommend refilling to our customers because with refills, they don't get [the] print quality, reliability, and value of HP printing, which is the reason why they bought an HP printer in the first place," says Boris Elisman, HP's vice president of marketing and sales for imaging and printing supplies. —*Kevin Savetz*

Encore, Encore!
Percentage of home theater purchasers who are...

... buying a replacement home theater system
21 percent

... buying an additional home theater system
8 percent

Source: CNET Personal Tech Radar

• TRENDSPOTTING

An overclocked 4GHz desktop is the latest salvo from game-system specialist **Alienware** against the competition. The new Area-51 ALX pushes a standard Intel Pentium 4 chip past its factory speed setting to 4GHz. Intel's fastest current Pentium 4 is at 3.6GHz, and the chip manufacturer won't introduce a 4GHz Pentium 4 until the first quarter of 2005. The desktop includes a special liquid cooling system devised by Alienware to reduce overheating. Also hot is the price: The machine starts at about $4,200.

—*Dinesh C. Sharma and John G. Spooner, News.com*

Google Exposes Credit-Card Info

Simple queries using the Google search engine can turn up a handful of sites that have posted credit-card information to the Web.

The lists of financial information include hundreds of cardholders' names, addresses, and phone numbers, as well as their credit-card data. Much of the credit-card data that appears in the lists found by Google may no longer be valid, but News.com called several people listed and verified that the credit-card numbers were authentic.

The query highlights increasing concern that knowledgeable Web surfers can turn up sensitive information by mining the world's best-known search engine.

A company source says the search firm has a tool for Webmasters to remove pages from the archive, if they find that parts of their site violate laws or regulations. Moreover, the company has decided to allow anyone to request the removal from search results of any document that includes a Social Security or credit-card number.

—*Robert Lemos, News.com*